

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLGB #0185/01 0571332
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 261332Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3810

UNCLAS KIGALI 000185

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [RW](#)
SUBJECT: RWANDA SCENESETTER FOR A/S POWELL

11. (SBU) Post warmly welcomes the visit of Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Dina

SIPDIS

Powell. Rwanda is a nation still struggling to overcome the legacy of the devastating 1994 genocide, and reconcile populations at odds for most of Rwanda's modern history. Upwards of one million Rwandans lost their lives, and the nation's infrastructure, economy and society were terribly damaged in the genocide. Today, the economy has been largely rebuilt, and great strides have been made in restoring security and establishing the underpinnings of a developing democracy. Yet much remains to be done. Below the mission reviews key issues for your visit.

12. (SBU) Political Pluralism: In 2003, President Kagame was elected to a seven-year term with 95 percent of the votes, and members of Parliament were also elected. In February 2006, local officials were elected to five-year terms in local elections, and in early March 2006 the new mayor of Kigali City was elected. The next legislative elections will be held in 2008, presidential elections in 2010, and local elections in 2011. The 2003 presidential and legislative elections were peaceful but marred by irregularities. Constitutional and regulatory restrictions on political party operations remain in place, and use of broadly-worded criminal statutes sanctioning divisionism and "genocide ideology" are a concern for the human rights community. Other human rights concerns include lingering restrictions on a free press, a judicial system still hampered by capacity limitations, and a developing civil society that must satisfy extensive licensing requirements.

13. (SBU) Press Freedom: Press freedom remains the subject of much debate and action in Rwanda. 2006 began with public criticism of Rwanda's media by President Kagame and of individual reporters by other officials. Later that year, we saw clear signs that senior GOR officials recognized the importance of a free, effective free press to the development of Rwanda's democracy and to international perceptions of the country. In spite of some reports of harassment, occasional run-ins with the police and other government authorities, and a worrisome physical attack on one journalist on February 9 this year, Rwanda's media appears considerably freer than it was two or three years ago. The number of independent media outlets continues to grow: nine radio stations are now on the air, and 37 newspapers are being published. Last year the New Times became the first daily paper. Newspapers such as Focus, Umuseso, Newsline, and Umuvugizi regularly publish articles critical of senior government officials and institutions and the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front without government sanction. In fact, local journalists, who do admit to self-censoring on occasion, often tell us that the over-riding concern for them is the day-to-day economic obstacles to making journalism profitable.

14. (SBU) Justice and the Genocide: Over 800,000 suspected

"genocidaires" (those who participated in the 1994 genocide) are the subject of judicial inquiry by the gacaca courts, a traditional system modernized and expanded by the GOR. Over 51,000 cases had been adjudicated by 1545 gacaca courts by the end of 2006. Many of those so judged return to prison with lengthy sentences, and the prison population has been rising at a worrisome rate. The GOR just released over 9,000 gacaca suspects and regular convicts from the nation's 16 prisons, and plans additional releases, providing temporary reductions in the prison population. While the most serious genocide offenders will be judged by the regular courts, the gacaca courts represent the principal attempt by the GOR to achieve justice and reconciliation, a difficult policy balance, given Rwanda's history of ethnic animosities.

15. (SBU) Economic Development: Rwanda's main challenges remain its small economy, relative isolation, poor infrastructure, energy insecurity, and poorly developed human capital. Rwanda's economy remains largely dependent upon foreign aid, while its population remains overwhelmingly rural with over 90 percent of families earning a living through subsistence agriculture and 56.9 percent of households living below the poverty line of 250 Rwandan francs a day (about \$0.45). However, Rwanda has achieved an average GDP growth rate of 6 percent over the past six years and increased the total value of exports by 23 percent in 2005. The government has established important policy benchmarks for overhauling the economy, and establishing Rwanda as a regional crossroads bridging the Francophone west and Anglophone east. It has achieved major improvements in the areas of tax collection, banking, trade agreements, anti-corruption, and fiscal policy. It has improved road condition throughout the country, and maintained a low corruption rate relative to neighboring countries. In 1996, there were a total of 91 parastatal enterprises, and over 50 of those enterprises had been privatized by the end of 2006. Privatization of the telecommunications and banking sectors has largely been completed and Electrogaz is scheduled to be privatized in FY 2008.

16. (SBU) Poverty Reduction: The government has made efforts, with measurable results, to reduce poverty and to improve access to health care and education, despite its severely limited resources. Under its national policy of universal primary education, the GOR provides free primary education to all children. A joint GOR-donor task force is focusing on improvement of girls' education. The GOR is also attempting to improve access to health care through greater decentralization to ensure inadequate health services at the local level. In addition, it has implemented plans for the prevention, protection, and reintegration of street children (currently 7,000 out of 4.2 million children), including vocational training to promote self-reliance through development of income-generating skills. Rwanda is revising its Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2007. Rwanda had completed the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) debt relief initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative by the end of 2006. Completion of these two debt initiatives significantly reduced its overall debt. Anticipated GDP growth for the immediate future should continue at 5-6 percent, while inflation may rise given high energy costs and large donor inflows. Rwanda does face challenges to food security from cyclic rainfall shortages.

17. (SBU) Global Health: Rwanda is one of the most severely HIV-affected countries of 123 countries receiving USG funding under PEPFAR, a \$15 billion, five-year, multi-agency global plan to combat HIV/AIDS. Rwanda was selected as one of the 15 focus countries for its level of infection, the severity of its health situation, and the leadership demonstrated by the Rwandan government and its people in fighting the epidemic. Recent results of a 2005 demographic and health survey, officially released by the GOR, indicate a national HIV prevalence rate of 3.0 percent (3.6 percent for women, 2.3 percent for men). The survey suggests that women are contracting HIV/AIDS at a younger age than men, and that for both sexes prevalence in urban areas

is approximately three times higher than in rural areas. By the end of FY 2008 the USG's PEPFAR program in Rwanda will provide at least 50,000 persons with ARV treatment, prevent 158,000 new HIV infections, and provide care and support to 250,000 persons affected by HIV /AIDS, including orphans and vulnerable children. FY06 PEPFAR funding for Rwanda was approximately \$72 million. The funding for FY07 is expected to be \$94 million. DOD PEPFAR funds will result in the testing of all RDF troops each year.

¶8. (SBU) In addition, Rwanda is a phase II country for the President's Malaria Initiative. This program will work to dramatically reduce the incidence of malaria through new treatments, indoor residual spraying, home based management of fever in children and increased bed net use. PMI funding for the first year of the program is \$20 million. The Mission also implements successful programs in child survival, maternal and child health, reproductive health and family planning. These programs have annual budgets of approximately \$8 million.

¶9. (SBU) Democracy and Governance: The Mission program, led by USAID, focuses on three areas: local government, civil society, and reconciliation. The agency supports decentralized governance through an innovative program in which health and governance objectives combine to ensure local management and delivery of high quality health services. The program is intended to demonstrate ability for local governments to manage and fund public services. The program is complemented by a civil society program that will give over 400 small grants to local organizations that provide services, income generation, or other economic development opportunities. The agency also supports a series of smaller projects related to reconciliation, such as activities in women's micro-finance, women's legal rights, land policy and law, and youth trauma therapy.

¶10. (SBU) Specialty Coffee: In 2001 when USAID spearheaded the development of the specialty coffee sector in Rwanda, the country produced only low-grade commercial quality beans for export despite coffee being the traditional number one export earner. Over the past six years, USAID has invested an estimated USD 10 million in promoting and developing the Rwandan coffee industry, building and rehabilitating coffee washing station, training farmers and "cuppers" (coffee tasters), organizing cooperatives, encouraging banks to lend to Rwandan investors to build coffee washing stations, and improving rural infrastructure. Today, Rwandan coffee has become known as one of the "best of the best" coffees in the world. Rwanda exported 1,100 tons of high quality specialty coffee in 2005, and 2,000 tons in 2006. While still a small proportion of overall coffee exports, these crops earn top prices for the coffee growers, and have resulted in better health care, education, and housing in coffee farming communities. In 2006, Starbucks launched a promotional campaign featuring the best of Rwandan coffee, a program seen by an estimated 19 million customers per week in over 5,000 Starbucks retail stores throughout the US.

¶11. (SBU) Regional Security: Overall trends are increasingly positive throughout the region. Successful 2006 elections in the DRC have brought hope of a stabilizing neighbor to the east, and greater cooperation between the two governments. Uganda and Rwanda enjoy the most positive relations in years, and the simmering internal political problems in Burundi show signs of improvement. However the Forces Dmocratiques de Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR) (an armed group of Rwandan origin formed from the remnants of the former armed forces of Rwanda and the Interahamwe militias, some of whom bear responsibility for the 1994 genocide), continues to operate in North and south Kivu provinces of eastern DRC. The FDLR conducted an insurgency in northwest Rwanda in 1997 and 1998, prompting the RDF to re-enter eastern Congo to pursue and, eventually, put down the insurgency. The RDF left eastern Congo in 2002 and, despite causing continued instability in the Kivus, the FDLR has not threatened Rwanda militarily since then. Recent cooperation with the DRC government and armed

forces in encouraging the reintegration of militia forces, including those of rwandaphone General Nkunda, shows progress can be made in eastern Congo. However, the FDLR, currently estimated at between eight to ten thousand combatants, remains an unresolved worry for the GOR and the international community.

¶12. (SBU) Tripartite Plus: In 2004, the USG facilitated the formation of the Tripartite forum for Rwanda, Uganda, and the DRC (with Burundi added in 2006) to discuss regional security issues. The USG last facilitated meetings on the margins of the UNGA in New York in September 2006. The next meeting has been set for the middle of March in Kigali. In December 2005, the Tripartite Fusion Cell (TFC) started operations in Kisangani, DRC, with the primary function of sharing information on the foreign-armed groups in eastern Congo. The GOR usually has two representatives on the TFC. Much work has been done on the four Focal Points, located in the capital cities, with the ultimate view of closing the TFC and relying upon direct communication and information-sharing among the governments. A principal focus of the March meeting will be on ending regional security threats by "negative forces."

¶13. (SBU) AU Mission: The Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF), one of the most competent and professional militaries in sub-Saharan Africa, has approximately 2,500 troops deployed in Darfur attached to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). In addition to RDF soldiers and officers serving in six-month rotations as force protection and military observers, there are 50 civilian police officers serving under AMIS and 250 RDF troops in Khartoum in support of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). The USG has been providing logistical and training support for the Rwandan contribution to AMIS since initial deployment in August 2004.

The US Air Force and US-funded contract airlines have provided transport for all troop deployments (except the recent deployment of one battalion by Algerian aircraft), and US contractors have conducted training for seven battalions in preparation for the Darfur deployments. An additional battalion, the 14th, is currently being trained. Rwanda became a full ACOTA partner in June, 2006, and ACOTA now provides a full nine-week Peace Support Operation training by US contractors (MPRI). One current bilateral issue is the application of the Leahy Amendment to the currently-training battalion and its commander.

ARIETTI